

**Evaluation of President Chuck Lepper PhD
Grand Rapids Community College Board of Trustees
May 20, 2024**

In April 2024, the Grand Rapids Community College (**GRCC** or the **College**) Board of Trustees (**Board**) conducted its annual performance evaluation of President Dr. Charles Lepper for the period May 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024. The Board conducted Dr. Lepper's evaluation guided by the parameters set by his January 16, 2023 Employment Agreement with the Board of Trustees; the Board's *Monitoring Executive Performance* and *Executive Limitations* Policies; and the Board-approved 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

Dr. Lepper's Employment Agreement requires that the Board's evaluation be completed by May 31 and be reasonably related to specific criteria developed jointly by the Board and the President for the academic/fiscal year in question (Para. 4, p. 4). The criteria developed by the Board and Dr. Lepper for this evaluation and the 2023-2028 Strategic Goals which each criterium advances are discussed below.

The Board's Monitoring Executive Performance Policy notes that, in its collaborative relationship with the College President, the Board clarifies and is responsible for College Goals, and the President clarifies and is responsible for the Means – the strategies by which the President, faculty, and staff will work to accomplish the Board-defined Goals. This Board-President collaboration occurs within the context of the Board's Eight Critical Characteristics. These critical characteristics describe our vision of the College as it navigates, under the leadership of the President, through our rapidly changing environment into a flourishing future:

- We are a learning college with a clear focus on teaching and learning.
- We are a collaborative college built on a culture of trust – in relationships and partnerships.
- We are a college that demonstrates excellence and equity.
- We are a college committed to be accessible to all.
- We are a college that uses a systems thinking framework for all planning and decision making.
- We are a college where senior leadership creates a culture of improvement using data-supported processes and procedures to drive high levels of student success and optimal organizational performance.
- We are a college where leadership teams are strategic, visionary, and collaborative.
- We are a college with strong academic, program, and/or financial partners within K-12, business, government, and the philanthropic communities.

With these Eight Critical Characteristics as a backdrop, the president is evaluated at least annually in two critical areas —

A. Achieving the Strategic Plan Goals (“Ends”):

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Completion and Transfer
3. Equity
4. Community Impact
5. Infrastructure and Sustainability

And

B. Operating within the Board’s *Executive Limitations* Policies:

1. Academic Freedom
2. Asset Protection
3. Budgeting/Forecasting
4. Communication and Counsel to the Board
5. Compensation and Benefits
6. Emergency Executive Succession
7. Financial Condition
8. Treatment of People
9. Vision/Future.

Highlights of the Board’s AY 2023-24 performance evaluation highlights can be found below.

My vision for Grand Rapids Community College is clear: to recruit and retain top-tiered faculty and staff that reflect the community we serve; to strengthen our partnerships with K-12 and business and industry; to foster a culture of inclusivity, diversity and belonging; to empower our students with skills and knowledge they need to thrive in an ever-changing world; and to ensure that Grand Rapids Community College continues to be a national leader in innovation, education, and workforce development.

Charles W. Lepper, PhD. Investiture Speech, September 14, 2023

Achievement of Board-Approved Academic Year 2023-24 Presidential Priorities

In June 2023, Dr. Lepper proposed five priorities he had selected to receive focused (but not exclusive) attention in the College AY 2023-24 work toward the College 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. After review and discussion with Dr. Lepper, the Board agreed that these five priorities would advance the 2023-2028 Strategic Goals.

Priority 1: *Finetune the college’s Strategic Plan 2023-2028 to include clarification around definitions and measurable goals/outcomes. (Strategic Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*

Priority 1 Board of Trustees Highlights: Dr. Lepper has led GRCC well in revising the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan to better define goals, identify strategic initiatives, publish timelines, and anchor key metrics. Dr. Lepper’s clarification of relevant baseline data and his development of

procedures to better capture and maintain that data are among the timely outcomes of this fine-tuning because the Board seeks to be data-informed in its qualitative analyses.

The launch of the Strategic Initiative Dashboard – complete with baseline data and foci on Enrollment, Retention, and Completion – is an impressive and ambitious method of aligning the College with its Accountability and Excellence Values. It further seeks to measure and inform on one of the Board’s most pressing concerns: student success (see Board Policy *Vision/Future*). The Strategic Goals framework that retires the use of “college action plan” or “CAP” terminology in favor of “Priorities” is more accessible to and attainable by all sectors of the campus community. The Strategic Plan revision is also responsive to the Board’s request to add an overarching value on offering programs that will lead to jobs and careers that provide – at minimum – living-wage jobs (Strategic Plan Overarching Principle 5).

Priority 2: Provide support and leadership for the college’s upcoming accreditation reaffirmation with the Higher Learning Commission in Spring 2024. (Strategic Goals 1, 2, 3, 5)

Priority 2 Board of Trustees Highlights: Since its founding over 100 years ago, GRCC has been continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Accreditation is a rigorous external review that looks closely at the College to determine whether we do what we say we do, and how well we do it. Accreditation is a crucial prerequisite to our students’ ability to receive state and federal financial aid like the Grand Rapids Promise, Michigan Achievement Scholarship, and U.S. Pell Grants, and to our students’ ability to transfer credits they earn at GRCC to another college if they transfer.

Every ten years, the College is required to complete an accreditation reaffirmation process with the HLC. Re-accreditation affirms that the College remains a high-quality, ethical, and transparent institution that is aligned with its own Mission, Vision, and Values. Preparing for and going through the reaccreditation process is a monumental campus-wide task with significant ramifications on our ability to serve our students and our community.

The Board is quite proud of Dr. Lepper’s leadership of the GRCC 2024 reaccreditation process. The Assurance Argument preparation materials for all constituencies on campus were exceptional. Over the course of 18 months, he engaged nearly 100 GRCC employees to develop, draft, and refine the 100-page Assurance Argument and supporting materials demonstrating the College adherence to HLC criteria. Clear and helpful communications were developed and distributed to educate faculty, staff, students, and Board members on each HLC Criterion early in the process. Under Dr. Lepper’s leadership and engagement, the College Community was very well prepared to demonstrate its commitment and adherence to the College Mission, Vision, and Values and the College’s compliance with the HLC’s high standards. Dr. Lepper supported and guided the reaccreditation process within the first year of his leadership at GRCC and with a number of senior leaders who had not previously been through a reaccreditation process.

The initial feedback from the HLC review team who were on the GRCC campus on March 25-26, 2024 was positive. The team was highly complementary of GRCC's Assurance Argument and its 600+ supporting documents and the work the College did to prepare the college and community for meaningful and engaging dialogue with them over the course of two days.

To date, the HLC has provided Dr. Lepper and his team with their draft report for review for errors of fact. The Board awaits a final determination of accreditation by the HLC Institutional Actions Committee.

Priority 3: *Develop and implement a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan which includes new and innovative recruitment strategies and a focus on retention and completion. (Strategic Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)*

Priority 3 Board of Trustees Highlights: GRCC's inaugural Strategic Enrollment Management Team was established in March 2023. Under Dr. Lepper's leadership and vision, this cross-sectional team has established and begun implementing a Strategic Enrollment Plan that to date has yielding the following highlights:

- Revised marketing strategies
- Improved communication with students (prospective, continuing, and returning)
- Weekly enrollment reports
- Five "Pillar Teams" (Drive Course Scheduling by Student Demand; Remove Student Barriers, Encourage Momentum and Accelerate Completion; Reduce Equity Gaps; and Reimagine and Reposition College Brand.

The Board celebrates the following AY 2023-24 enrollment victories at this moment when Michigan (like many states) is experiencing a decreased birth rate, a net population loss, and a declining college going rate, all in the absence of a comprehensive immigration policy on the federal level:

- **Fall 2023:** Enrollment grew by 3.2% to 12,201.
- **Winter 2024:** Enrollment grew by 3.6% to 11,556.
- **AY 2023-2024:** Enrollment of Hispanic/Latino/Latina and Black/African American students grew 12% each.
- **AY 2023-24 Lakeshore Campus:** Enrollment grew by 13% over the previous winter term.
- **General:** Enrollment increase in new student and returning student populations.

Priority 4: *Re-establish a sense of community and belonging at GRCC for students, faculty, staff, and the greater community. (Strategic Goals 2, 3, 4, 5)*

Priority 4 Board of Trustees Highlights: The Board recognizes and values Dr. Lepper's intentional work to connect and engage every sector of the College. Dr. Lepper's ongoing work to cultivate a sense of trust, community, and belonging across the entire College community in Grand Rapids

and Holland are key to advancing our Values of Equity, Diversity, Sustainability, and Respect. Some examples include his regular meetings with the Student Government Association executive council and union leadership, employee townhall meetings, a personalized welcome to new faculty and staff, attending campus and athletic events; and new activities such as GRCC night at the Whitecaps for employees and alumni .

Priority 5: *Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with K-12, 4-year transfer partners, and business and industry. (Strategic Goals 1, 3, 4, 5)*

Priority 5 Board of Trustees Highlights: the Board applauds the intentional and thoughtful work by Dr. Lepper and the operational team to deepen relationships with diverse GRCC champions including:

- The Kent Intermediate School District Career and Technical Education Center (articulation agreements for certificates earned by high school students to qualify as stackable credentials at GRCC; moving the Adult Basic Education program to GRCC’s DeVos campus)
- The Hispanic Center of West Michigan (Memorandum of Understanding to host the Hispanic Youth Leadership Conference; October 2023 Community Listening Session)
- Urban League (Memorandum of Understanding to host the Young Black Male Achievement Conference; April 2024 Community Listening Session)
- Corewell Health (ongoing nationally recognized Medical Apprenticeship program; new training to environmental services and hospitality services employees to up-skill them to more advanced roles)
- Calvin University (Institutional Memorandum of Understanding)
- Grand Valley State University (collaboration of institutional research teams to identify and study the characteristics of GRCC students who transfer to GVSU and graduate within eight years)

**Additional General Strengths Highlights under the Board’s
*Monitoring Executive Performance and Executive Limitations Policies:***

- Outstanding stewardship of College finances.
- Periodic detailed, thorough, short- and long-term budget updates and forecasts.
- Prompt, thorough responses to Board questions.
- Prompt, informative notification of pending and potential media inquiries.
- Effective advocacy for the College via relationship building with state and federal lawmakers and their staff and a commitment to keeping them educated on how budget and legislative proposals will affect the College and its students (for example, testified and met with legislators regarding the renewal of the Michigan New Job Training Act; appointed by the Governor to the Michigan Educational Trust Board of Directors; represented GRCC at the February 2024 White House conversation on Workforce Development)

- Openness to feedback on opportunities for growth, illustrated by the initiation of a Presidential Impact Feedback Survey in Spring 2024.

External Involvement

- Board Member of The Right Place
- Board Member of West Michigan Works!
- Board Member of the Grand Rapids Chamber Foundation
- Participant in the Grand Rapids Chamber CEO Roundtable

A Sampling of Significant Initiatives

- Advocated for and helped secure a \$16.8 million Capital Outlay Award from the State of Michigan to support the renovation of the Learning Resource Center.
- Coordination and completion of Lakeshore Campus Table-Top Emergency Exercise in collaboration with city and county officials to identify gaps in GRCC protocol and staffing.
- Implementation of Free On-Campus Parking for Student Employees in response to feedback from student employees. The rollout of the plan appears to be correlated with a significant increase in on-campus student employment.
- Commission of a 2023 Economic Impact Study in Kent and Ottawa counties and focused on both credit and non-credit courses.
- Establishment of an Academic Advising Council co-led by an administrator, a class-room faculty member, and an academic advisor to develop an action plan based upon recommendations of the National Association of Academic Advisors.
- Meet and Confer Salary Study to examine our compensation model and make recommendations for a new classification system (expected completion before July 1, 2024).

Conclusion

The Board of Trustees values Dr. Lepper's leadership and rates him as Highly Effective. We look forward to our continued work with him.

The Grand Rapids Community College Board of Trustees
May 20, 2024